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FM AMEMBASSY VIENNA
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INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 0300
RUEHBM/AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST PRIORITY 1388
RUEHSF/AMEMBASSY SOFIA PRIORITY 1105
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 0356
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C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENNA 003491

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STATE FOR EUR/ERA - LAFARGE AND EUR/AGS - SAINT-ANDRE

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SUBJECT: AUSTRIA ON THE DECEMBER 11-12 EU FOREIGN MINISTERS
MEETING (GAERC) AND THE CHINA ARMS EMBARGO

REF: A. STATE 195044

[1](#)B. STATE 194456

Classified By: A/DCM Gregory E. Phillips for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (SBU) A/DCM delivered reftel demarches on the upcoming EU Foreign Ministers meeting (GAERC) to Austrian European Correspondent Andreas Riecken on December 6.

[1](#)2. (C) Riecken made the following substantive comments:

-- On the China Arms Embargo: Riecken confirmed that there was a policy split in the EU between those who want to link the strengthening of the Code of Conduct to a lift of the China Arms Embargo, and those who do not accept such a linkage. He said France was leading those who supported a link. Finland was leading those who would strengthen the Code of Conduct and make it legally binding, without lifting the arms embargo. Riecken commented that "not many members are openly supporting France," but he said France had the weight to block a decision if there were no agreement to lift the embargo. As a result, Riecken said he did not expect major changes. He said this was "too bad," because the EU needed to strengthen the Code of Conduct in any case. He noted that the Finns could put the matter on the agenda of the European Council meeting.

-- On Serbia: Austria appreciates NATO's Partnership for Peace decision, considering it an important step in enhancing Serbia's European perspective.

-- On Bosnia: The EU needed to decide the future of Operation Althea. It was clear that EU member states would reduce the number troops, but the question was when to make a decision on the details. Austria supported making a general decision to draw down now, and waiting about two months to decide on numbers in light of developments on the ground. Some other member states preferred to decide both on the general principle of a drawdown and on numbers, while expressing the intention to "confirm" the decision in light of events later. Riecken said it was clear that EU member states considered the security situation to have improved sufficiently to justify a drawdown to about a third of current strength.

-- On Israeli-Palestinian Issues: Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik will brief her colleagues on her recent visit to Israel and the Palestinian Territories. She attended the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the State of Israel in Jerusalem, and she met with Palestinian Authority figures

in Gaza.

-- On Afghanistan, Riecken said there was a lot of thinking about whether the EU should develop a civilian police training mission as an ESDP operation. He noted that it would be difficult to staff such a mission, because the EU was also planning to undertake the largest civilian ESDP mission ever next year when it provides police trainers to Kosovo. The Kosovo mission will require about 1000 participants, he said. However, there was also a good deal of interest in providing trainers to Afghanistan.

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